

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

Have you ever had the desire to travel to some exotic, far-away destination? I think it's pretty safe to say that **most** Wisconsinites and Minnesotans **have** - especially when the roads get icy, and the sub-zero temperatures begin to set in. Now, in addition to the tropical islands of the south Pacific - like **Hawaii**, or **Tahiti** - I've always thought that **Egypt** would be an interesting place to visit. After all, it's the home of one of the great **cradles of civilization** - 2 of the 7 wonders of the ancient world were located there; the Great **Pyramid** at Giza, and the **Library** at Alexandria. There's also the mysterious **Sphinx**, and the **Nile River**, and quite a number of **modern-day** wonders as well. However, the **problem** with traveling to Egypt, or to almost **any** other country in our world today, is that you never know when **trouble** is going to break loose. You may **get** there just fine and dandy - but, you may **not** get **back** again. Today in our text, our Lord **Jesus** makes a journey to the country of **Egypt**. But, because the heavenly Father is watching over His every action, it's **no problem** for Him to go **Down To Egypt, And Back Again**.

Our text begins, *"After the Wise Men were gone, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to Joseph in a dream. He said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, because Herod will search for the child in order to kill Him.'"* The first thing we should look at here is the **Wise Men** - the **Magi** who came from the East in order to **worship** the Christ-Child. That visit from the Wise Men must have been very **comforting** and **reassuring** to Mary and Joseph, because it provided them with yet **another** confirmation of the message which they had received from the Angel Gabriel who had said, *"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end."*

Forty days after Jesus' birth, when He was **presented** in the Temple, **Simeon** told **Mary**, *"Listen carefully, this Child is appointed for the falling and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."* How **interesting** it is, that just a short time later, that **sword** was already beginning to do its **piercing**. The life of her first-born child, probably less than a year old, was in **danger**. I'm sure you remember that **Herod** had sent the Wise Men to **Bethlehem** in order to **locate** this Child, under the **pretense** of wanting to go and worship the Child **himself**. But in **reality**, Herod had **no** such intention. He wanted to **kill** this Child, who seemed to pose a **threat** to his earthly **throne**. Of course you will **also** remember that the Wise Men were warned in a dream **not** to go back to Herod. So,

they returned to their country by **another** route.

Perhaps we should take a few moments to look at **Herod**. Who **was** this man? History records him as Herod the **Great**, primarily because of the **building projects** which were carried out under his direction - particularly the **temple** in Jerusalem. But his **character** certainly doesn't **merit** the name. Herod was a **paranoid** and **merciless** tyrant. He had used his **family name** in order to be appointed by the Roman Emperor as **governor** over the Jews. Later, he used political pressure and money, to have that title **upgraded** to **king**. Herod was a cruel, crafty, and heartless man. He had no less than **ten** wives - all of whom he **murdered** because of his jealousy, suspicion, and rage. Among other things he also murdered one of his **mothers-in-law**, because he thought she was guilty of **treason**. And because he felt so **insecure** and **uncertain** of his ability to rule, he even murdered most of his own **sons**, so they couldn't try to **replace** him! Any time Herod thought that his position as **king** was being **threatened**, there was no telling **what** he might do. So, we shouldn't be too surprised that Herod ordered all of the boys in **Bethlehem** under the age of **two** to be **killed**, because the prophecies pointed to **one** of them as the newborn **king** of the Jews.

As we have already heard, when an angel told Joseph that the life of Jesus was in **danger**, Joseph took his family, and **fled** to Egypt. Jesus had been born to **die** - but not **yet**. This was no time for Joseph to be **macho** - it was no time to **question** the advice or the motives of God. Joseph and Mary were people of **faith**. They understood that God could choose any way He wanted - **ordinary** or **extra-ordinary** - in order to **protect** the Savior whom He had sent. So when God said, "Run for your lives" - they **ran**. I think it's kind of interesting that later on, during Jesus' public ministry, this was the **same advice** which He gave to His **disciples**. He said, "*When they persecute you in **one** town, **flee** to the next.*" That very **night** Joseph, Mary, and Jesus set out for the land of Egypt.

The journey would be **difficult** - not to mention **inconvenient**, **perilous**, and **expensive**. But just the same, Joseph **obeyed**. By the way, this trip was probably **financed** by the **gold** which the Wise Men had brought for the baby Jesus. As always, God **provides** just what we **need** - at just the **time** we need it. Perhaps we could **also** consider why God chose to send them to **Egypt** instead of somewhere else. It really doesn't **seem** to be a logical choice. After all, **Egypt** had a **bad reputation** among the Children of Israel, and rightly so. It was well known for its **idolatry**, and **tyranny**, and **enmity** against the followers of the LORD. It had been a place of **slavery** for them in the past, for a period of over 400 years. In fact, many of the things we hear coming from **Herod** in our text, are the very same things which

came from the **Pharaoh** of **Egypt** back in the days of **Moses**. He too had called for the **murder** of thousands of Hebrew male children. So, why would God send His own **Son**, into that kind of a place? There are a **number** of reasons which suggest themselves. First of all, it was **out** of Herod's jurisdiction - and that solved the **immediate** problem. But just as importantly, it brought about the ultimate **fulfillment** of yet another Messianic **prophecy** - the one in our text, quoted from the Prophet **Hosea**, "*Out of Egypt, I called My Son.*"

I hope you **noticed** that I said this was the **ultimate** fulfillment of Hosea's prophecy. As is the case with **most** of the prophecies in the Old Testament, this one has **more than one** fulfillment. The **first** was at the time of the **exodus** from Egypt, when God brought **all** of His people out of Egypt, and led them to the Promised Land. But the most **important** fulfillment of this prophecy is found in **Jesus**, when God brought His **one and only Son** out of that land. How long did they **stay** in Egypt? We don't know. God simply tells us, "*He stayed there until the death of Herod.*" It may have been a **long** time, and then again, it may **not**. But in either case, Joseph and Mary would need to be **patient** - to put their lives on **hold** - to **wait** until God gave them the "all clear" signal.

It should not go unnoticed by us, that **Matthew** is the apostle who makes a special effort to **note** the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the **Messiah**. The reason for that, is that Matthew was **writing** his Gospel for his fellow **Jews** - and naturally, he would want to put forth **every available fact** which showed **Jesus** as the **Messiah** - so there would be **no doubt** in their minds about **following** Him.

There should be no doubt in **our** minds either. This little trip **Down To Egypt And Back Again**, gives us a beautiful example of God's **love** for us. It shows us that **God's** love is a love which **reclaims** and **restores**. In our text, our heavenly Father **reclaimed** the life of His **Son** from the clutches of a ruthless **tyrant**, and led Him to a place of **safety**. What He does for **us**, isn't really much **different**. When the powerful forces of **evil** - the "**Herods**" of our day - seek to destroy our **faith** in the Lord, God's **love** will be there to **reclaim** us, and to lead **us** to a place of safety. In our text, God took Joseph, Mary, and Jesus **away** from their **home**, their **friends**, and even their **synagogue** - but in due time, He also brought them **back** again. And again, He deals with **us** in much the same way. When we are taken **away** from the comfortable surroundings of our **home**, and the **worship** with which we have grown up, to live among the "**idols**" of this world, God's **love** will be there to **restore** us to His side. When we go **Down To Egypt** - whether by **force** or by **choice** - whether for a **long** time or a **short** time - our God will continue to remain **faithful** to us, and His

love will be there to bring us **Back Again**. Amen.